



The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter
1st Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division (M)
Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07



Issue 14 ~ 16-30 April 2006

Hello again from Camp

Taji! The weather has been wild these past two weeks as we have experienced temperatures of over 95 degrees, heavy rains and even hail. Yes, I did say hail! This week we will hear from the Bandits Platoon and Prophet Platoon. You'll also learn about the hard work of the Brigade Aviation Element, Civil Affairs, our NCOs, and the Eagles.

PHOENIX PROJECTS

The Phoenix Battalion continues to excel at its mission as the Projects Mangers for the Raider Brigade. Over the past two weeks our Soldiers were instrumental in the openings of two schools, the delivery of a much needed water pump generator, the completion of a new playground, village medical visits and numerous project visitations to ensure the quality of work is high. We have also been very busy with planning and starting work on many new projects. These projects include new medical clinics, water lines, electrical lines and numerous village generators among other things. It is with great pride and enthusiasm that we continue on with our mission to provide a brighter future for Iraq.

Project Manager PAO – LT Jordan Maxcey

THE PROPHET PLATOON

The Prophet Platoon from A Co. has been busy as of late. The workload is intense, and the weather is hot, but the Soldiers continue to get the job done day after day. Time has been flying by lately and it is hard to believe it has already been over four months since Prophet hit the ground here.



Above: Members of the A Co. Prophet Platoon.

Many soldiers have been trained to do highly technical tasks that are new, and they continues to learn more every day. The platoon has been covering the signals intelligence side of the house for the Raider Brigade, and gives 24-hour coverage to the Brigade and Battalions in an effort to keep the enemy on the run by feeding reports to units on the ground. Much of this time is spent sorting through several hundred reports to determine exactly what is the valuable intelligence. Many Prophet Soldiers have also excelled in other ways while working 12-14 hours each day. SPC Andre Bradley recently won Soldier of the Month and was awarded the Army Achievement Medal.



Above: SPC Andre Bradley. March 2006 Soldier of the Month.

CPL Bryan Henley was highly commended for successfully translating a Russian tank maintenance manual, allowing the Iraqi Soldiers to better understand and operate their equipment. In their spare time, the Soldiers from Prophet have been enjoying the occasional ping pong game, a tune on the guitar, or just a quiet evening chatting with friends and family in the local internet café or phone center. Everyone is excited about mid tour leave, and the Soldiers send their best to the loved ones back home!

Prophet PL – 1LT Clayton Finch

THE NCO CORPS...BY SERGEANT MAJOR SEAMAN

Hello again from Camp Taji, Iraq. All's well here, getting along with the business of the deployment. I don't know how it is for you all, but time is moving pretty fast over here. As stated previously, the 1st Special Troops Battalion is an incredibly diverse and complex Battalion. I thought I'd spend some time talking about one of the strengths of this great Battalion – The NCOs. Every other Army from many different countries knows that one of the cornerstones of our Army's success is the Officer and NCO command relationship.

No other Army in the world has an NCO Corps like the U.S. Army. NCOs are professional Soldiers. What does being a professional Soldier mean? It means they study their profession, always try to prove themselves; they read professional journals, Army regulations, field manuals, etc; they share ideas with one another; they discuss training, tactics, and leadership.



Above: MSG Alfredo Pacheco, hard at work, doing what he does so well...building things.

Professional Soldiers care and know about their Soldiers and families. First and foremost, NCOs get the mission done and accomplished. Training our Soldiers is one of the most important things we do. I want to assure you all that the Phoenix Battalion has one of the most modern, professional cadres of NCOs in this Brigade. It is evident in everything this Battalion does. Mistakes are made, naturally, but the mistakes that are made by our NCOs are not made with malice, neglect, or dereliction; they are honest mistakes. This Battalion has some of the hardest working NCOs I've ever served with and they compliment their commanders and bring credit to their units. NCOs are primarily responsible for the individual training of our Soldiers and they do it well. When we get our new Soldiers in theatre, we take care of them

by continuing to train them for 2 weeks prior to assuming their full duties. NCOs are responsible for this additional integration training to certify that the Soldier is ready. The NCOs of the Phoenix Battalion are also responsible for the care of our Soldiers. I'm not talking about tucking them into bed at night – I mean hard, sweaty training is taking care of Soldiers; ensuring that Soldiers know and understand the standards is taking care of Soldiers.



Above: SSG Erik Ramirez, another fine NCO, after being reenlisted by CW2 Richard Filopone.

I am proud of the NCOs of this Battalion, we've been through a lot together. I've seen them grow, learn, develop and become technical experts at what they do. I've also seen them challenged with adversity and hardship, worry and doubt, and watched as they faced every challenge and task – and succeeded in accomplishing the mission. Most importantly, I've seen them become leaders or better leaders. I hope you are proud of these Sergeants. They deserve a lot of credit for the successes of this Battalion. Until next time, Phoenix 7 out.

SOLDIER SPOTLIGHTS FROM THE "RENEGADES"

Everyday, dozens of flights arrive and depart from Camp Taji airfield. Soldiers departing on and returning from

mid-tour leave, and Soldiers conducting business in Camp Liberty, Camp Anaconda, Camp Falcon, and others, utilize the tremendous air power of the 4th Infantry Division. It helps that the Division's Aviation Brigade is stationed here at Camp Taji, making coordination easier. The other thing that makes the coordination easier is the Brigade Aviation Element.

The Brigade Aviation Element, or BAE, is yet another part of the Brigade Headquarters Detachment making the Brigade successful here in Iraq. They are responsible for coordinating air transport requests for everything from the routine shuttle missions to Camp Liberty and Camp Anaconda, to the attack aviation assets used in raids and searching for insurgents, to emergency evacuation missions.



Above: SSG Tahir Hasan coordinating Raider air requests.

The BAE remains a 24 hour operation in the Brigade Headquarters, overseeing the air requests for the over 3,000 Soldiers of the Raider Brigade. Dedicated professionals such as SFC Espino, SSG Hasan, SSG Cole, SPC Kelly, and SPC Kiger, help save lives. That's because every flight scheduled is one less ground patrol needed.

Renegade 6 – CPT Ed Cox



Above: SPC Thomas Kiger hard at work as a member of the BAE.

“LITTLE BY LITTLE” – A LOOK INTO THE WORLD OF CIVIL AFFAIRS

Many people have expressed amazement that I am back over here in Iraq on a second tour of duty. Many have wondered why I am willing to accept the separation from my wonderful family, my great friends, and the other profession I love. The answer is pretty simple to me. We are making a difference here and the difference helps make the world a little safer. The Iraqi people are generally very nice and just need a chance to recover from years of neglect.

It helps to remember that Iraq has a population of about 27 million and the average age was only 19 when I was here the first time. This means that half the population knows no other concept of government than the regime of Saddam Hussein. The general population was not allowed to own cell phones, satellite phones, or satellite TV. Information about the world outside of Iraq was strictly guarded. The only people most Iraqis have ever seen be successful are the ones that got to the top by the wrong road. The Iraqi people need a

breathing space to learn a better way to be successful.

I have driven through the area I was responsible for during my first deployment. The first deployment was in the NW quadrant of Baghdad and was exactly like working for a large city police department doing Community Oriented Policing but without the infrastructure support or government agencies in place. My current deployment is about 30 kilometers due north of Baghdad and is predominantly rural with an agriculture based economy.



Above: Like many roads in Iraq, this one is littered with trash but progress is being made.

This time I was amazed to see the number of new businesses and new construction all over the place. In the US one of the key economic indicators is new housing starts and new businesses opening. Everywhere we go we are seeing houses being built. New market places (strip centers) are popping up all the time. The Iraqi Government continues to become more active and more efficient all the time. The number of Iraqi Police patrols and the increased activities of the Iraqi Army are visible everywhere. The other day we drove by a building under construction that I thought looked like a school. We made contact with the construction crew and sure enough, it was a brand new primary school (elementary

school) being completely financed and monitored by the Ministry of Education. We had some damage to electricity lines and fresh water pipelines recently and the respective ministries were out within 12 hours repairing the damage. And last but not least, I met with the regional director of the Ministry of Irrigation this week to determine if he needed any help with funding canal cleaning, pump station repair, equipment, or anything else. He told me the canal maintenance was running on schedule, the only pump station needing repair was the one I was already working on, and he told me the Ministry of Irrigation already had newly purchased heavy equipment on the way from China. Good news, good news, and more good news. All of it is very encouraging to those of us over here.



Above: Successful water projects bring irrigation and drinking water to the people.

It is hard for soldiers to explain the differences we see over here everyday. It is even harder to explain our reactions to what we see. I am not talking about the combat patrols, improvised explosive devices, or occasional rocket or mortar fire. I am talking about the basic functions of government and the differences between an established democracy and a nation coming out from under years of neglect. I am amazed to realize the number of things I took for granted. Things our culture and country have that are only now being established over here. Can you imagine an

area the size of Johnson County with several large towns but without any law enforcement services, hospitals, road repair crews, or access to drinking water?



Above: New Fire Station soon to open.

How about no fire departments, no ambulance service, and schools with 6 teachers and 400 students? How about having to have an armed guard at any government facility, even a simple water pump station, 24 hours a day? How about only 7 gas stations to serve a population of about 1.5 million? Can you imagine having electricity for 2 hours and then none for the next 3 to 4 hours every day when the temperature ranges from 115 to 125 degrees? These are the things we are dealing with and making a serious impact in improving.

My team is currently involved in many projects for the people of Iraq. Road projects, school projects, building a new medical clinic, building a women's work center and daycare, repairing irrigation water pump stations, installing new water purification stations and water networks, and providing back generators for rural villages are just some of the things. Things really are improving in most areas of the country. The Iraqi people see it and appreciate it, even if the US media doesn't ever acknowledge it. Things are getting better but Iraq has a long way to go to recover from 20 years of neglect.

The Iraqi government ministries are becoming more active and more effective. Eventually the ministries will have the capacity to accomplish all of these types of projects on their own but they just aren't there yet. You can't realize how good we have it in America until you travel to some of these other places and see what they try to work with. I know I will never complain about Texas summers or police body armor ever again.



Above: Helping to build a brighter future for Iraq's children

Hopefully this article helped answer some questions and shed some light on the positive things going on over here. American military personnel and civilians are doing great work over here and the good stories deserve to be told. I am proud of what my team is accomplishing to assist the Iraqi people and government to stand on their own.

Civil Affairs Team Chief - MAJ Jeffrey Pugh

BANDITS

Much like the social fabric of America, the 1st BCT EOD security platoon has gathered a multitude of different people from different backgrounds to not only work together but to accomplish a very tough mission. And much like America we have thrived. There have been many hurdles to overcome, but under the expert guidance of

first class NCO's, many with prior experience in Iraq, the troops of the 763rd security escort platoon have not only overcome those obstacles, but have stepped up and become first class highly versatile guardians of freedom. The job is never over, but with every IED the platoon takes out, a sense of accomplishment is felt by every member of the team. With every call, each member of the platoon knows that they are helping their fellow Soldiers come back safely.



Above: Members of the EOD Security Platoon.

The platoon has grown from 12 to 20 Soldiers, incorporating many different job titles including, Commo Soldiers, cooks, mechanics, MI, infantry, and a trio of high speed motivated MP's! All have overcome the "fish out of water" feeling Soldiers feel when grouped with other Soldiers of different training philosophies and jobs. Not everyone is used to working 24 hours on, and those that are, really aren't. But through all of the adversity, and all of the head aches, the EOD security platoon has gelled together and become a highly mobile and adaptive fighting unit that you can all be proud of.

S3 NOTES

Greetings from Camp Taji! It has been awhile since my last article in the FRG newsletter. Since then the battalion has completed training at NTC, deployment thru Kuwait and has conducted over 1000

combat missions in Iraq. Your Soldier's performance has been superb. The battalion is conducting operations across the brigade battlespace and each company is critical to the success of the brigade's mission. This has been an exciting two months in the battalion. We have transferred our area of operations to both the Iraqi Army and to other brigade units. We are now running over 80 reconstruction projects in excess of \$38 million. The purpose of these projects is to improve the quality of life among the local population and to increase their confidence in their government. Success in these operations will ultimately decrease the ability of the enemy to conduct attacks against coalition forces. I have been out with your Soldiers on patrol and know they are making a difference. They also tell me that they prefer this new mission because it changes daily and they are not stuck in a rut. Some projects are small, like an irrigation pump or a visit by medics to a village. Some of the projects are worth millions of dollars, like electricity and water into towns with populations of over 100,000. They are also providing sewer systems to towns across the BCT area of operations.



Above: Phoenix 3 conducting project assessments.

In addition, we continue to train the Iraqi Army. Now we are begging to train them not only on Infantry skills, but also our own specialty tasks. We are training

the Iraqis as MPs, Signal Soldiers, and Engineers. We are also helping them stand up their own Explosive Ordinance Disposal units. We are looking forward to the challenge of building new relationships with the Iraqi Army units.

Finally, this will be my last letter as the S3. I will move to the Executive Officer position in May. I am looking forward to the change in mission and the ability to help resource all your Soldiers for success. I would like to thank all the Soldiers and NCOs in the S2 and S3 sections for their great performance. They have given me the opportunity to learn and grow in what has been a challenging assignment.

Phoenix 3 - MAJ "Dave" Patton.

EAGLES

As the fight in Iraq continues to change, leaders must find ways to change and adapt with it. A key tool to aid commanders in this adaptation is the increased level of situational awareness allowed by communication. 1st Brigade's Signal Company, B Co., 1STB, is an integral part in allowing commanders to communicate with their soldiers.



Above: Bravo Company Soldiers setting up communications equipment.

The war in Iraq now requires commanders to communicate in an expansive battlefield. With every new patrol base, the Signal Network grows through the hard work of 1st Brigade's technical professionals.

In order to fulfill communications needs, Bravo Company has employed a new Command Post Node and an EPLRS network for 1-66 Armor's area of operations. The Command Post Node allows Commanders to have access to Secure and Non-Secure communications to include email, voice and tactical internet. The CPN also gives Soldiers the ability to call anywhere in the world including their homes. The EPLRS network expands the tactical communications footprint on the battlefield. This network extends 1-66 Armor's capacity to utilize FBCB2 and FM communication outside Camp Taji.

The task of setting up the Signal equipment begins with the leader's recon. The Signal Platoon Leader and Net Operations personnel take an extensive look at the site's communications requirements. The Company leadership must overcome any logistical shortfalls and challenges imposed by obstructions and terrain. When the maneuver element occupies a site, Signal personnel immediately begin the task of establishing communications. Within hours, the patrol base is able to communicate with Brigade Headquarters. In 1-66 Armor's area of operations, Bravo Company Soldiers employed the Command Post Node without delay and allowed 1-66 Armor a maximum command and control capability.

Bravo Company, 1STB has vital role in enabling 1st Brigade to complete its mission. The 1-66 Armor site is the company's third occasion to set up a Line of Site package outside Camp Taji in the past month. Anywhere there is a need for a forward element to communicate, there are Signal Soldiers to fulfill that need. The

technical requirement to administer the Brigade's network falls on well trained Soldiers and NCOs. In 1-66 AR's area and many other Iraqi towns, Commanders are able to exercise a communications advantage over insurgents. This advantage is due to the quiet professionalism of a few technical experts who manage the Signal Network

Signal Platoon Leader – 2LT Ronald Carter



To Dare Is To Do

Larry A. Seaman
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army

John W. Cross
LTC, EN
Commanding